THE

CASE

Of our PRESENT

Theatrical Diſputes,

FAIRLY STATED.

In which is CONTAINED,

A

SUCCINCT ACCOUNT

OF

The Riſe, Progreſs and Declenſion of the Ancient Stage; a comprehenſive View of the Management of the *Italian*, *Spaniſh*, *French* and *Dutch* THEATRES, with ſome free Remarks upon our own.

CALCULATED

Entirely for the uſe of the Public, and wherein, the only Method is Suggeſted, that can prevent all future Debate.

Supposed to be written by Mr. James Ralph.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

THE CASE OF OUR Preſent THEATRICAL Diſputes, &c.

THERE never was a Seaſon in which the old Proverb that aſſerts the Likeneſs between the Stage and the World, was more fully verified than at preſent. The Scene is exactly the ſame on the great Theatre and the ſmall one. The Diſputes between the Governors and the governed have a perfect Reſemblance, and we may ſafely affirm in both Caſes, that the Heat and Unruline-ſs of the one, is abſolutely the Effect of the ill Management and Corruption of the other. Heretofore the Theatres were conſidered purely as Places of Diverſion, but the public finds them now Places of Buſineſs, inſtead of being amuſed we are diſturbed; and where we us'd to go to

calm our Troubles, we are called upon to attend thoſe of other People. Old Plays and new Diſputes are the Product of every Winter, and *Scotch* and *Iriſh* Appeals are not more frequent at *Weſtminſter*, than thoſe of *Covent-Garden* and *Drury-Lane* in our daily Papers. They afford us morning Diſputes, inſtead of evening Diverſions, increaſe the Number of our Diviſions which are already but too many, and while we have two foreign Wars, and two and fifty domeſtic Quarrels upon our Hands, theſe of the Managers and Players muſt be thrown into the Bargain, and the public be as much plagued to quiet the Playhouſe, as it is to ſettle the Miniſtry.

For my Part, I think it requires no great Penetration to diſcern that both Players and Managers are in the wrong, and that the natural Conſequence of their fooling, muſt be teaching us more Wit. If they could have been ſatisfied with receiving the paltry Sum of thirty thouſand Pounds *per Ann.* and could have agreed amongſt themſelves about parcelling it out, they might have enjoyed it perhaps many Years longer, the Poſt of a Manager might have been more lucrative, than that of an honeſt prime Miniſter, and half a Dozen of the firſt rate Actors, might have enjoy'd what contents the Board of T———y. As it is, we may reaſonably expect that the pub-

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lic will think it high Time to cut off the Source of theſe Diſputes, by ſetting ſome Bounds to this Expence, obliging the Managers on the one Hand to pay, as well as receive ready Money, and thinking it reaſonable on the other, that Players ſhould be content to live like Gentlemen, and not think of raiſing miniſterial Eſtates. We have at Preſent all the Ways in the World of waſting our Money; Wars, Taxes, Debts, Lotteries, *Vaux Halls*, *Mordington*'s, and fifty other leſs public Drains, and therefore tho' we may be compell'd to go thro' ſome of theſe dirty Roads, and be led Blindfold thro' others, yet I preſume we ſhall hardly be Fools enough to continue in ſuch a Track with our Eyes open, but lay hold of this Opportunity of reducing theatric Diverſions within their juſt Bounds, ſo that all may be fully paid what they fairly deſerve, and the Town be entertained at ſuch Prices, as under its preſent Circumſtances may be afforded.

We ſhall hear no doubt a mighty ſtir made as to the Property of ſome People, and the Merit of others, but I beg leave to make a Diſtinction between a Manager's having a Property in his Houſe, and making a Property of his Audience. It would certainly be a very great Hardſhip if the public ſhould ſuffer a Perſon who had applied his Talents, laid out his Money and devoted the

beſt Part of his Time, to the furniſhing them with decent and laudable Diverſions: I ſay I ſhould think it very hard if the public ſhould ſuffer ſuch a Perſon to ſtarve, or even confine him to a narrow and ſcanty Way of living. The Servants of the public ought certainly to live by the public, which implies ſomething more than an ordinary Livelihood, as indeed it is requiſite, that he who conducts ſo great an Affair, has the Direction of ſo many People, and riſques perhaps a conſiderable Fortune of his own, ſhould enjoy a handſome Revenue, and not toil for a bare Subſiſtance. Such a Man I think, and I dare ſay, I ſpeak the Sentiments of the public, may deſerve a thouſand or twelve hundred Pounds a Year.

But I cannot for the Life of me conceive that in Virtue of any Grant, Patent or Licenſe, a Manager acquires a Right to live at the Expence of the Public at the Rate of an *Engliſh* Duke, or a *German* Prince. I do not ſee why he ſhould have his Hotel in Town, and his Villa's in the Country, nor do I perceive the abſolute Neceſſity of more than one Machine, and a ſingle pair of Horſes. Above all, I am againſt his keeping a Seraglio out of the Profits of his Employment, for tho' the public are certainly bound to diſcharge the Expence of their own Pleaſures, it is not at all clear to me that they have any thing to do with

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his. I likewiſe preſume that good Port may ſerve, except upon Feſtivals, and then I am not againſt a moderate Allowance of *French* Wine. But for coſtly Entertainments, waſh'd down with Rivers of Burgundy and Oceans of Arrack Punch, at the ſettling of Terms with a new Actor, or ſigning of Articles, I muſt confeſs I cannot away with that. I am an Enemy alſo to Building, Planting, keeping packs of Dogs, and all other Airs of Quality in ſuch a Perſon. It is one Thing to inherit a large Eſtate from one's Anceſtors, and another to enjoy a precarious Gratification, for ſuperintending the Pleaſures of the public. A Man of Rank may ſpend his Income, without being expos'd to Cenſure, but for a Perſon who has an annual Stipend only, and that during Pleaſure, to throw away the laſt Shilling, and run in debt perhaps when he comes to make the neceſſary Preparations for the enſuing Seaſon, is ſuch Folly and Madneſs, that I ſhould think it right to grant the *Cuſtodium* of him to a ſenſible female Houſekeeper, with a ſtrict Injunction to take care, that while the public's Allowance was magnificent, his own Whims ſhould not bring him to want Bread. This I ſay ought to be his Fate inſtead of a further Ingulgence, the Condition of the public being ſuch as not to be able to lay Diverſions aſide, or to pay for them at an exceſſive Rate.

It is on the other Hand a great Hardſhip upon the Town, when a Man undertakes to manage their Diverſions, in order to repair his Miſmanagements in his private Fortune. The public fares in that Caſe as a Plantation, when it has a batter'd Beau ſent for its Governor, that is to ſay, they are tax'd to furniſh out the Expences of his Pleaſures paſt, preſent and to come. He thinks of nothing but fleecing, the proper Cares of his Province hardly ever come into his Head, and he is conſtantly in the Hands of thoſe, whoſe Intereſt it is to keep them out. His Paſſion for Money diſcovers itſelf in every Thing, and provided there is a ſtrong Appearance of gratifying that, he ruſhes boldly upon any Expence that he is told is neceſſary to acquire it. *Italian* Singers, *Groteſque* Dancers, *French* Harlequins, and all the Trumpery of a Suburb-Fair, are ſummon'd to a Theatre Royal; and when the Pockets of an Audience have been pick'd of many thouſand Pounds for theſe fine Sights, they are inſolently upbraided with their bad Taſte, and told that all theſe extravagant Diſſipations of Money was purely to gratify their Humour; which in the firſt Place is not true, and if it had, it is Impudence in a Servant to talk thus to his Maſters. A Man who would be a Manager ought to have a Head turn'd for the Buſineſs, ſhould have

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a Genius for theatric Performances, and know how to correct the Caprices of an Audience. The Manager of a Theatre is as much anſwerable for the public Taſte, as a prime Miniſter for the Condition of the public, both may certainly be bad, but if they are ſo, the Managers deſerve rather Puniſhment than Pity.

It is the great Miſchief of this Age, that all Men think themſelves equal to all Things. A Perſon who has very little turn for Letters, no great Acquaintance with the Stage, and is in his own Nature not over capable of Application, will without Heſitation undertake to do all that the great Parts, long Experience and indefatigable Attention of *Booth*, *Cibber* and *Wilks* ſcarce enabled them to do. But when Men undertake Taſks to which they are unequal, it is very ſoon perceived, and thoſe who act under them, make them quickly underſtand that they are not inſenſible of their Deficiencies. When it is once certain, that he who ought to be the Judge of all Things, is at the Bottom ſcarce a Judge of any Thing, every one who has Parts, or fancies he has Parts, will ſet what Value upon them he pleaſes: and as the Liberty of all, actually deprives all of Liberty; ſo this very Spirit of Ambition muſt neceſſarily produce Diſputes and Confuſion, to the utter Subverſion of that Oeconomy, which is neceſſary

ceſſary for the Entertainment of the Town. In this Caſe, I ſhall not enquire into the legal Remedy that is already very well known, but what I pretend to inſiſt on is the Right of the public, to preſcribe both to Managers and Players, nay, and to ſuch as have a coercive Power over theſe; for I am my ſelf certain, and before I lay down my Pen, I believe I ſhall prove it to every Man's Satisfaction, that the Senſe of the public, ought to be the ſole Rule with Regard to dramatic Entertainments, and that if at any Time the public err, they ought to be corrected in ſuch a Manner as to convince them of their Error, and not with an Air of Authority, which ſeems to dictate to them what they are to like. We pay for our Diverſions, and we pay ſufficiently for them, but this is ſolely at our own Option, and as we are at full Liberty to pay, or not to pay, as we pleaſe, we ought to have the ſame Freedom in paying for what pleaſes us; we have Taxes enough Heaven knows to merit ſome Degree of Licenſe in the Playhouſe, and yet there an exciſe Scheme prevailed not many Years ago, which ſeems to have deprived us of Poets, and left us none but Players, over whom we can exerciſe our Power.

We hear it often ſaid that the Manners of a People, depend in a great Meaſure on their dramatic Entertainments, and we hear it alſo ſaid

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that the Genius of a Nation is beſt learned from theſe. If there be any Truth in this, it is ſufficient to inform us of how great Importance it is to any Nation, that theſe kind of Diverſions, ſhould be properly regulated, and it is under a due Senſe of this, that I have undertaken to lay my Thoughts before the public. I declare in the firſt Place, that I have not the leaſt Connection with, or Prejudice againſt either the Managers, or the Actors, I wiſh them all as much Succeſs and Happineſs as they can deſire; and I write with no other View, than to procure this for them, provided that Juſtice be at the ſame Time done to the public; but while we talk in looſe and general Terms of the Prerogative of the Stage, and of the great Advantages, which the Nation reaps, or may reap from it, we form no certain or diſtinct Ideas, but entertain only ſuch confus'd Notions, as ſerve to perplex or miſlead us; and therefore, before we proceed farther, I think it abſolutely neceſſary to clear up this Point firſt, and to make it apparent, that great Advantages may be derived rom a Stage under juſt Regulations, and that on the contrary, nothing can be of worſe Conſequence, nothing can prove more fatal to the Manners, or to the Reputation of a great People, than their Fondneſs for theatrical Diverſions, if they are ill manag'd. To do this in ſuch a Manner as

may at once inſtruct and entertain the Reader; I know not any better Method, than to give him a ſhort Hiſtory of the moſt celebrated Stage in Antiquity, I mean that of *Athens*, and this for two Reaſons; firſt, becauſe it has been always regarded as the moſt compleat Model, and next, becauſe there appears to have been a very great Conformity between the Cuſtoms, Manners and Spirit of the *Athenians*, with thoſe of the People of *Great-Britain*.

I ſhall begin with obſerving, that though the *Athenian* Stage, was always under the Direction of the Magiſtrate, yet it's Freedom fell and roſe in Proportion to that of the Government, ſo that when the Conſtitution of the *Athenian* Republic, was in it's full Vigour, the Stage of *Athens* was in it's higheſt Glory; and as the Liberties of the People began to ſink, as Corruption overſpread their Manners, and as they loſt that Fire and Spirit, which ſet them at the Head of the nobleſt Nation in the Univerſe, I mean the *Greeks*, ſo the Life and Beauty of their dramatic Performance gave way, their Decorations increaſed, and the Expence of the Theatre roſe to its greateſt Height, when the Performances thereon were of leaſt Value. All the learned World are perfectly well inform'd as to the known Diviſion of the dramatic Hiſtory of that State, into the old; the

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middle and the new Comedy; but this does not at all hinder, that the Generality of Readers, may receive both Pleaſure and Profit, from a clear and ſuccinct Account of theſe Diviſions. The Critics are ſo fond of diſplaying their Learning; ſo deſirous of multiplying their Quotations; ſo ready to run into needleſs Digreſſions about Words, that it is not an eaſy Matter for a Perſon of common Underſtanding, to acquire from their Accounts, a juſt Notion of Things. My Intention is not to conſider this Matter critically, or to compare the Writers under theſe Diſtinctions with each other in Point of Merit, but to give the *Engliſh* Reader a fair Account of Facts, that by conſidering the State of the *Athenian* Stage, he may the better judge of our own.

THE old Comedy began in the earlieſt Times of the Common-wealth, and as long as it laſted, is ſaid to have retained a ſtrong Reliſh of it's rude Beginnings. While this ſubſiſted it was no unuſual Thing, to point out particular Perſons, to expoſe notorious Acts of Corruption, flagrant Frauds and Vices of ſingular Enormity, and this was very agreeable to the Freedom of the *Athenian* Conſtitution, for it kept all Degrees of People in awe, not from the Fear of Puniſhment, but of Shame, which cannot well fall upon the Innocent. While the Poets had this Licenſe, there needed

nothing but Wit to collect a large Audience, and the Desire of seeing such Men expos'd upon the Stage, as gave Law perhaps in other Places, always drew Crouds to the Sight of these Comedies. Our modern Critics are unanimous in condemning the *Athenian* Stage at this Time, as guilty of unwarrantable Licentiousness, and the Story of *Aristophanes*, having baited the great *Socrates* to Death, is set forth as an undeniable Instance, tho' after all, the Fact is far enough from being so clear as they would have it. *Athens* like all other free Countries, was then split into Factions, *Alcibiades* endeavour'd to put himself at the Head of the State, which the true Patriots oppos'd as they had Reason; *Socrates* was Tutor to *Alcibiades*, and had taken some Pains to shew him, that the vulgar Religion was all a Cheat, and that nothing could be more ridiculous than the *Pagan* System of Divinity. *Alcibiades*, like a rash hot headed young Man, to shew how he throughly was ting'd with his Tutor's Principles, demolish'd the Statues of the *Athenian* Gods that stood in their cross Streets, which occasioned a great deal of Noise and Disturbance, and no small Mischief to the City. This prepostrous free Thinking, or Humour of private Men, affronting the Religion of their Country, on a Presumption of their own superior Sense, is what *Aristophanes* exposes

expoſes in his Clouds, by which it is certain, he meant to bring *Socrates*, *Alcibiades*, and all their Faction into Odium with the People, in which he ſucceeded; but it was many Years afterwards, that *Socrates* was put to Death, and upon a Proſecution of Impiety, and corrupting the Youth, for which the People might be prepar'd by his being thus ridicul'd on the Theatre, but *Ariſtophanes* however was not the Inſtigator of this Proſecution, nor had any immediate Hand in his Death. But to return to the old Comedy. It was certainly irregular, full of Life and Spirit, conducive to the Amendment of Morals, but withall a little ſcurrilous by attacking particular Perſons, and pointing them out to public Cenſure. It was for this Reaſon I ſuppoſe, that the *Athenian* Poets were generally Players alſo, and acted a capital Part in their own dramatic Pieces, which is the more credible, ſince it is certain, that in *Greece* the Profeſſion of a Player was very Honourable, which it never was at *Rome*. But when the Power of the People began to decay, and ſome rich Nobility grew to ſuch a Height of Power, as not to endure the Freedoms exercis'd by the Writers of Comedies; it fell out that a Man was ſometimes very rudely treated for his Wit, as it happened to *Eupolis*, who was thrown into the Sea by ſome People he had expos'd in

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a Comedy of his, entitled *Baptæ*; after this came in a Law of which *Horace* takes Notice in his art of Poetry, that forbid the Writers of Comedies, to point out any Man by Name. The Licenſe of the Stage was ſtill however very great, and the Poets continued to do their Country great Service, by ſhewing all Sorts of Vices in the foulеſt and moſt ridiculous Colours, and this is what is commonly call'd the middle Comedy, more regular, and more agreeable to Rule than the former, and better adorn'd, for it has been always found neceſſary to ſupply to the Eye, whatever is deficient to the Ear, and to endeavour to pleaſe ſuch as ſee Plays, who are always a more numerous Body, than thoſe who come to hear them.

THE great Delight the People took in beholding dramatic Entertainments, made it on the one Hand, neceſſary to preſerve them, and on the other, ſuggeſted the means of making theſe Entertainments ſubſervient to the Deſigns of great Men. With this View *Pericles*, who contrived the Subverſion of the free State of *Athens*, in order to introduce a kind of placid Tyranny, which was to be ſupported not by Force of Arms, but by Extent of Influence, began to adorn the City with fine Buildings, in which he conſumed the Trea-

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ſure of the Allies, depoſited with the *Athenians*, in truſt for the Service of the common Cauſe: He encouraged alſo a general and exquiſite Taſte in all the fine Arts, but was particularly careful in providing for the Decorations of the Theatre, in hopes that through Politeneſs, that Cuſtom of reflecting on the Great, would be left off, which however ſubſiſted beyond his Time, for he affected only to ſoften the Democracy, whereas the great Men who lived after him, eſtabliſhed an Oligarcy. But *Pericles* introduc'd that Cuſtom which prov'd equally fatal to the Taſte, and to the Liberties of *Athens*. For he ordered when the Playhouſe Seats were above a certain Price, that the public Treaſury ſhould pay for the poor Citizens Tickets, which releas'd them from any Uneaſineſs, on the Head of the immenſe Expence that was afterwards thrown away upon the Theatre. The Reader will now eaſily diſcern the Effects of theſe Contrivances, and how the Stage by Degrees, was reduced to be a mere Spectacle of Amuſement, inſtead of an inſtructive Diverſion as originally it had been. When the great were free from the Apprehenſions of having their firſt Motions towards Sovereignty expos'd to the Populace by the comic Poets, they became Friends to that Entertainment which they hated before; countenanc'd that Kind of writing which

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ſerv'd their Purpoſes, and diſcourag'd as rude, indecent and unpolite, that bold and free Satyr, which was the Glory of the old Comedy, the *Paladium* of *Athenian* Liberty, and the Amazement of Poſterity. To make the People Amends for the Loſs of what was ſo agreeable to them, the Chorus was improv'd, the Number of Dancers increas'd, and new Ornaments daily added, yet without Expence to the People as they imagin'd; for their entrance Money was ſtill paid by the Exchequer, and tho' this was the Money of the State, yet the *Athenians* tho' the ſharpeſt People in *Greece*, were content to be bubled into a Belief, that what they paid for in General, coſt them nothing. Such was the Progreſs of the new Taſte, while any degree of Freedom remain'd in this City, but as that decay'd, the Splendour of the Theatre augmented, and as all public Satyr was thrown out, ſo the Love of Fable; of Intrigue; of Chit-Chat, and what is well enough known to us by the Name of genteel Comedy, grew into Eſteem, and it began to obtain as a Maxim, that Comedy was only to repreſent the Occurrences of common Life, which however it might be an Improvement of the Art, in Reſpect to its Regularity, was certainly a Degradation of it conſider'd in another Light, and took

took away from it that great political Uſe which firſt recommended it to the State, and which was the Reaſon why the People decided of Comedies in the laſt Reſort, whereas, the Judgment of the eſtabliſh'd Critics with Reſpect to Tragedy was final. Thus much may ſerve as to the middle Comedy, let us now deſcend to the laſt period of the *Athenian* Stage.

When the *Macedonian* Power overwhelm'd the Liberty of *Greece*, the *Athenians* found it convenient to make ſtill greater Alterations in their dramatic Performances, and this brought in the new Comedy from which the *Romans* copied; but tho' this kind of Comedy was dreſs'd out with all the Wit and Invention, for which the *Athenians* were ſo famous, and notwithſtanding theſe Pieces were enrich'd with ſo many fine Sentences, that many learned Men have thought their Time well employ'd, in making large Collections of them for the Uſe of Poſterity; yet it was ſtill found neceſſary to add new Ornaments, and thoſe too very expenſive, inſomuch, that we are told by Writers of the greateſt Credit, that it coſt the *Athenians* more to ſupport their Playhouſes, than they expended in obtaining the Sovereignty of *Greece*. *Apollodorus* a wiſe Citizen and a good Patriot, endeavour'd to apply a timely Remedy to this growing Miſchief, by pro-

curing a Law that in Times of great Neceſſity, the Funds eſtabliſhed for the Maintenance of theſe Diverſions, might be applied for the Service of the State; but he not only miſcarried in this prudent and honeſt Scheme, but the People at the Motion of one *Eubulus*, paſs'd a Law that it ſhould be capital for any Man to attempt the reviving the Project of *Apollodorus*; and this is the Reaſon of the broken Hints we meet with in the Orations of *Demoſthenes*, who could not patiently bear to ſee his Country enſlaved for Want of Money, to ſupply the Exigencies of the State, and at the ſame Time, was afraid to riſque his Life by a Motion at once contrary to the Laws, and to the Humour of his Countrymen. Thus the *Athenians* preſerv'd their Theatre at the Expence of their Liberty, as well as their Reputation, and grew as fond of being remarkable for their Shews, as their Anceſtors were admired for their Virtue. We need not wonder therefore, that the famous *Roman*, *Scipio*, *Naſica*, whom on an extraordinary Occaſion, the Senate ſolemnly pronounc'd the moſt worthy Man in the Republic, was ſo great an Enemy to the Theatre, and ſo vehemently oppos'd the Introduction at *Rome* of thoſe Diverſions, which as he truly ſaid, had enervated and ruined the *Greeks*. Thus we ſee in what Senſe theatric Diverſions are ſaid to have ſuch an Influence on the Minds of the Peo-

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ple, when and how they may contribute to excite a Spirit of Virtue, when and how to eradicate that Spirit, to debilitate and debauch the Minds of an Audience, and thereby bring on the Ruin of a State, for of this we may be assur'd, that like Cauſes will conſtantly produce like Effects; and that if we encourage amongſt us thoſe effeminate and luxurious Arts, which ſoftned and deſtroyed the braveſt and freeſt Nation that Hiſtory mentions; we muſt inevitably ſhare their Fate, ſooner or later, and therefore it becomes us upon ſuch an Appeal, as is now made to the public, to act with Spirit and Dignity; to ſupport the undoubted Right of a *Britiſh* Audience, over both Managers and Players, and to take care that our Diverſions ſhall not either Prejudice our Fortunes, or our Manners. This may appear ſevere Doctrine to ſome, but before I make an end of this Diſcourſe, I hope to ſhew that it is juſt and right to all.

It was long ago remark'd, that it was not only a difficult Thing to reſtrain the Theatre within juſt Bounds, but that Actors of all Men living are moſt apt to over value their Merit, and to run out into ſuch extravagant Acts of Vanity, as to be ſcarce endured, nay, hardly credited. *Callipides* a Tragedian, who if *Plutarch* tells us Truth, was much of the ſame Diſpoſition with Mr. Q——n.

meeting one Day King *Agiſlaus*, and thinking he took too little Notice of him, ask'd him whether his Majeſty did not know him. *Agiſlaus* looking upon him very ſteadily, anſwer'd, I think I do, are not you *Callipides*, who get your Bread by perſonating other Men? It is remark'd of the famous *Anthony*, the Gallant of *Cleopatra*, that before he was acquainted with her, he was wont to carry about with him an Actreſs, who took as much ſtate upon her, as if ſhe had been a Queen: and in the Decline of the Empire at *Conſtantinople*, the People ran abſolutely mad about their Players, ingaging in their Favour in ſuch Factions and Seditions, as turn'd to the Ruin of the State. Reaſon and Experience, therefore ſhew us that we are to be upon our Guard, with Reſpect to ſuch Sort of People, and to repreſs their Inſolence, and take down their extravagant Vanity, if we would not have all the World laugh at ours.

It is a Thing very obvious to skilful and ingenuous Critics, that we have had our old, our new and middle Comedy, as well as the *Athenians*. What is it that charms us ſo much in *Shakeſpear*'s Plays, as his ſhewing us the Virtues and Vices of our Anceſtors, with an honeſt and manly Freedom; and why have we not hiſtoric Plays nearer our own Times, but that the Nature of Men is alter'd, and we cannot now bear what

in *Shakeſpear*'s Time, met with Applauſe; the Reign of *Henry* VIII. was as near that of *Elizabeth*, and had as cloſe a Connection with it, as if we were now to repreſent what paſs'd before the civil Wars. Yet who dares draw a *Strafford*, or a *Laud* with the ſame Freedom, that he has done *Wolſey* and *Cromwell*. *Beaumont* and *Fletcher* came next, and the immortal *Johnſon*, who tho' they have not the ſame majeſtic Spirit, yet maintain a great Dignity and Freedom in all their Performances, of which we ſcarce meet any Footſteps in ſucceeding Poets; for amongſt us as well as amongſt the *Greeks*, Rules and Regularity have pruned away the moſt uſeful Part of dramatic Entertainments, and for the ſake of gratifying a critical Taſte, we have relinquiſhed that Empire over the Paſſions, which we are ſtill ſenſible our old Poets attain'd, becauſe we ſtill feel it from their Works, and are oblig'd to confeſs the Excellency of thoſe Plays, which ſome of our Critics have condemn'd.

We ſhould find it perhaps a Taſk too hard for us, if we ſhould attempt to correct the preſent reigning Taſte, I mean among our Poets, who are all grown ſo fond of imitating our Neighbours, that they have lately produc'd nothing that is maſculine or original. But we may unqueſtionably if we inſiſt upon it, bring both Managers and Actors

tors to Reaſon, and live to ſee Things once more upon their old Eſtabliſhment, when we had better Plays, better Players and lower Prices. There are certainly a large Number of old Pieces, that if they were a little alter'd, might be added to what are call'd ſtock Plays, and the reviving two or three of theſe in a Winter, would vary our Entertainments, without putting the Houſe to any great Expence; and if we content ourſelves with this Bank of Wit for a few Years, it is not impoſſible that Things may take a new Turn, and the Law for Licenſing the Stage be repeal'd, which might encourage us to hope for a new Race of Wits.

By this Management the Buſineſs of a Player, for ſo I think they are pleaſed to ſtile it, would become far leſs laborious than it was in former Times, and the Candidates for Employment in that Way, become ſo numerous, as to leave no Room for ſuch extravagant Demands as have been lately made, and which have been very juſtly complained of. The *Engliſh* Stage has never wanted very famous Actors. We read in *Baker*'s Chronicles of incomparable Players in the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, *viz. Richard Burbage*, *Edward Allen* and *Richard Tarleton*, the laſt ſo much admired, that his Head was ſet up for a Sign in ſeveral Parts of the Town. As for Mr. *Allen* he never

never had ſo much as three Pounds a Week, and yet he ſaved enough to erect a College at *Dulwich*, and two Alms-houſes in this City. It is very true, that three Pounds a Week, was then a greater Salary than it would be now; but there is far from being that Diſproportion, that modern Players contend for, and I ſhall hereafter make it apparent, that Players have at Preſent many Advantages which they had not then; and which are more than equivalent to the Difference between the Expences of thoſe Days and theſe.

I muſt likewiſe take Notice, that whatever our Managers may think of it, our Theatres were better directed heretofore, than they are at Preſent: When *Ben. Johnſon* wrote for the Stage, *Inigo Jones* had the Management of the Scenes and Decorations. In ſucceeding Times Sir *William D'Avenant* and Mr. *Killigrew* gave as pregnant Proofs to the full of their Capacities, as even the ingenious Mr. *Rich* himſelf; and yet they never attempted to impoſe exceſſive Prices, or aſpir'd to live with the Magnificence of Men of Quality from the Profits of a Playhouſe. Decorum was in thoſe Days better underſtood, People were ſatisfied with living in a Manner ſuitable to their Rank, and never thought of emulating in their Houſes, Equipage or Dreſs, thoſe from whoſe Bounty they deriv'd their Subſiſtance. Theſe

Follies

Follies were reſerv'd for later Times, when Men of Quality have condeſcended to direct Theatres, and have thereby done all in their Power to deſtroy the Diſtinction, there ought to be between Players and ſuch as maintain them.

THERE may be indeed ſome Objections made to what I have advanc'd as to the Frugality of former Times, from the ſuppoſed Diſtreſſes of ſeveral great Men who flouriſh'd in them. We ſhall be put in Mind of Mr. *Dryden*'s Poverty, and be told with an Air of Conviction, that Mr. *Betterton* ſcarce left enough to bury him; but let this Matter be fairly enquired into, and it will appear that no concluſive Argument can be drawn even from theſe well known Facts. That Mr. *Dryden* had prodigious Merit is not to be diſputed, and that his Merit was very amply rewarded, is a Thing as certain. His own Extravagancies, and a Turn in the Government, which prov'd fatal to his Intereſt, tho' he receiv'd an annual Penſion equal to his Salary as Laureat, ſo long as the great Earl of *Dorſet* lived, were the true Sources of his Misfortunes, and therefore, the public has not ſo much to anſwer for in this Reſpect, as is commonly imagined. The Worth of Mr. *Betterton* in his Profeſſion, was on a Level with that of Mr. *Dryden*, he was unqueſtionably the beſt Actor of his Time, and if we may believe

lieve very competent Judges a better Actor than any who have ſucceeded him. He was likewiſe a Man of Prudence, Probity and Oeconomy; and yet he died in very bad Circumſtances, but not thro' the Fault of the public. Mr. *Betterton*'s Salary was about five Pounds a Week, and he drew from thence, not only a very comfortable Subſiſtance, but laid up alſo a very conſiderable Sum of Money, which he ventur'd in Conjunction with Dr. *Ratcliff*, in a Project which fail'd and ruined Mr. *Betterton*; for as to the Doctor his running up a thouſand pair of Stairs, as he merrily expreſs'd it, ſet all right again. But what was this to the public, they did not contribute to Mr. *Betterton*'s Loſs, tho' they did to the making up that Sum which he had acquired before it, however, they were always extreamly generous to him in his Benefits; and he had as much Reſpect ſhew'd him by all Ranks of People, as ever any Man had of his Profeſſion.

It is impoſſible for the public, or for Princes to make every Man of Merit happy, in ſpight of his own ill Management or ill Luck. Mr. *Wycherly* was in a Priſon at the Beginning of the Reign of K. *James* II. who was no ſooner acquainted with it, than he gave Direction for paying all his Debts; but this Gentleman was ſo very modeſt, or rather ſo imprudent, as to make

out a defective Liſt, which defeated the Intent of his Majeſty's Generoſity, but ought not certainly to leſſen the Reputation of it. If Men who deſerve Encouragement from the public, by their Abilities in one Way, will precipitate themſelves by not exerting their Abilities in another, into Scenes of Miſery and Diſtreſs, Poſterity may and ought to pity them, but it is not either juſt or reaſonable, to lay their Misfortunes at the Door of the public. If Men are amply paid for their Performances, it is all that they can reaſonably expect; for if the public ſhould be profuſe to ſome, it muſt neceſſarily be ingrateful to others, and therefore it is much better it ſhould be ſtrictly juſt to all.

After the Revolution, when, tho' the Players ſtill continued the King's Servants, yet with due Reverence of his other great Qualities be it ſpoken, his Majeſty was not ſo proper a judge of their merit as ſome of his Predeceſſors. Things alter'd for the worſe, and the Theatre fell into great Confuſion; there were Managers in thoſe Days, I hope there are none ſuch now, who betook themelves to this Employment, purely for the Sake of Bread, behav'd in a low, tricking, dirty Manner, and treated their Actors as if they had been Beaſts of Burden, to be hacknied out as they thought proper. Such a Conduct was the more prepoſterous, the

more

more intolerable, becauſe thoſe upon whom it was exercis'd, had been uſed to quite different Treatment, had lived under the Directions of Perſons who knew how to value their Merit, becauſe they were proper Judges of it, and had no Way of raiſing their own Profits, but by encouraging the Induſtry of their Players. All this, and much more we learn from *Dryden*'s Prologues, *Vanburgh*'s Plays and *Cibber*'s Hiſtory of his Life and Times, ſo that it is apparent from Authorities antient and modern, that the moſt lawleſs People in the World are the Inhabitants of a Theatre, when they once break looſe, as they are the moſt orderly and uniform, when they keep themſelves within the Bounds of juſt Obedience, which is certainly the common Intereſt of their Managers and themſelves; for it is by their Harmony and good Agreement, that they charm an Audience, while their Diſputes ſerve only to diſguſt us, and either turn the Theatres into empty Deſarts, or transfer to them the Audiences of *Sadler's-Wells*, or *Tottenham-Court*.

When the Triumvirate governed in *Drury-Lane*, the Playhouſe was the beſt regulated State in Europe, as I very well remember. The Managers were at the ſame Time Players, and Players of the firſt Rank, which left it not in the Power of the Reſt to diſpute their Judgment. A

juſt Senſe of their own Intereſt led them to purſue a right Plan, they never depended upon any Thing but Merit. The very Humours of the Men, had a happy Influence on the public Diverſions. *Booth* had a Generoſity of Spirit, which at once hinder'd his being tempted to do a little Thing or bearing to ſee it done. In him every Actor who deſerved it, found a kind Patron and a conſtant Friend. *Wilks* was a great Oeconomiſt, and a well bred Man, he ſupported the Reputation of the Houſe without Doors, by his Juſtice and punctuality, he thought the Credit of the Theatre, ought to be as good as that of the Bank; and he had the Pleaſure of ſeeing it ſo by Dint of his Management; his good Breeding kept Things quiet within; he abhor'd Tricks and low Jokes, and as he was born a Gentleman, he ſuſtained that Character in his Employment. Mr. *Cibber* is ſtill living, and therefore I ſhall ſay leſs of him than I know, and indeed leſs may ſerve the Turn, ſince he has ſaid ſo much of himſelf; but this I will take the Liberty of ſaying, that his good Qualities were very beneficial to others, his bad prejudicial only to himſelf. He had a Fund of good Nature, which made him unwilling to ſee any Breaches, and he had ſo friendly and facetious a Way of ſhewing People their own Foibles, that he ſeldom failed of putting an end

to

to Diſputes, by convincing both Parties, that they were ridiculous. Under any one of theſe People, the Playhouſe might have been ill governed, but by their joynt Direction all Things went well, the Managers acquired moderate Eſtates, the Actors were happy or might have been ſo; and the public were entertain'd in a Manner worthy of a free People. Their Wiſdom in the Choice of Plays preſerv'd the Freedom of the Stage, and a Licenſer was never thought neceſſary, becauſe they had Senſe enough to bring nothing upon it that was licentious. The Town was ſo well ſatisfied, that they never grudged them their Prices, becauſe they were ſenſible that theſe Men knew their own Intereſt too well, to ſcrew Things up higher, or to let them down lower than they would bear. Beſides the theatrical *Arcana* were well preſerv'd as they ought to be, for an Audience if they ſee and hear what they like, have nothing to do with the private Tranſactions in the green Room, and it will be always fatal to the Players when they have.

After having ſaid ſo much of one Houſe, I think it but juſt to ſay a little of another, for as in the Midſt of the Triumvirate's Glory, there were polite Audiences at *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*, it would be partiality to deny Mr. *Rich* his Share of Merit. It was a Mark of his good Senſe, that

when

when he found it was impoſſible to contend with his Rivals in their own Way, he ſtruck out another, neither am I ſo ſevere a Critic, as to deny that his firſt Entertainments had ſomething in them, that deſerv'd the Approbation they met with. There is a wide Difference, a very wide Difference between *Harlequin* a Director, and *Orpheus* and *Euridice*. The one has Humour, Spirit, and even good Senſe to recommend it; the other, is abſolutely unworthy of all but *Punch*'s Theatre, and if the Scenes, Habits and Machinery had not coſt ſo much, might I think have ſerved well enough, for one Seaſon at *Southwark* Fair. I am alſo ready to admit that this Manager has ſhewn great Talents in his Way, and that it was perhaps a point of Weakneſs in the other Theatre to imitate him; they had much better have kept to their own Province, and have been content, that ſuch as deſired to *hear* Plays, ſhould come to *Drury-Lane*, and that thoſe who were fond of *ſeeing* them ſhould go elſewhere. There are enough of each Sort to fill a Theatre, and tho' Mr. *Garrick* ſhould perform *Hamlet*, I will anſwer for it, that the *Propheteſs* or the *Emperor of the Moon* ſhall not want an Audience. But when each Playhouſe labours to have all, and ſtrives to have more good Senſe, better Singers, and finer Dancers than the other, the natural

Conſequence

Conſequence muſt be, that the Town will reap Satisfaction from neither, eſpecially, if there be a Deficiency of Prudence in the Management of both, for then there muſt be eternal Competitions and Diſputes; Actors will be ſet up to Auction, and Caprice we know will carry People in bidding much beyond the Worth of the Thing. The Misfortune is, that the Managers are Brokers only, and bid for the Town, they furniſh a Houſe for our Reception, and we muſt pay for the Goods they put in, whatever they be, or how indifferently ſoever they are diſpoſed; hence, reſults the Right of an Audience to complain, for moſt certainly the public may take the Liberty of finding fault with it's Steward, and this too in Spight of any Agreements they may make among themſelves.

The Buſineſs of Property as I obſerv'd before, is quite miſtaken, the Managers Patent may run to his Heirs and Aſſigns, but there is no compulſive Clauſe as I apprehend, which gives him a Power of compelling People to come in. His Property extends no farther than his Playhouſe, the Audience are ſtill free, and unleſs he can find his Account in an empty Houſe, his Patent I am afraid will give him no Property at all. He muſt therefore, if he would have any Thing in his Pocket, be very cautious of talking of his

Power.

Power. The Tax he lays upon the public, ought like all other Taxes, to flow from the free Conſent of the People, and whenever he puts on theſe magiſterial Airs, how abſolute ſoever he may be behind the Scenes, he will be made ſenſible when he comes to the Article of Supplies, that a theatrical Government differs from a political one in this, that there is nothing gives it leſs Credit than *a ſinking Fund*; he may pleaſe himſelf with Notions of Sovereignty, and he may plague others by carrying theſe Notions into Practice, but I will be his Bond-ſlave, if ever he find his Account in it. Surrounded by a crowd of Gameſters, Attornies and Paraſites, he may fancy himſelf a great Man, or a great Politician; but if his Treaſurer, who ought to be his firſt Miniſter, is an able Man, he will adviſe him to diſmiſs his new privy Council, if he intends that his Government ſhould be long liv'd. It is true, that in ſome Caſes the People may be oblig'd to ſubmit to Rulers they do not like, and to pay in ſuch a Manner, and in ſuch Proportions, as may not tally either with their Underſtanding, or Circumſtances; but the Playhouſe is not that Caſe, there they ſtill are, and ever will be free, and therefore this ought to be taken into the Manager's Scheme of Policy, for whatever other Kings may do, he is bound to follow Sir *William Temple*'s Maxim,

that

that is to ſay, *he muſt be the King of his People, or no King at all.*

But in order to eſtabliſh this Point beyond all Doubt, and to throw ſome Light on a Subject, which it is the Intereſt of the preſent Diſputants to confound, it may not be amiſs to conſider the Practice in other Parts of Europe, and if we find that in all Countries it is expected that the Theatre ſhould be conducted regularly, decently and to the general Satisfaction of the Audience, that all imaginable Pains are taken in Reſpect to Actors, Scenery and Decorations, and that after all, theſe are ſubmitted to public Judgment, and the Prices of public Spectacles govern'd by the Spectators Inclinations; then I preſume we may very well expect that theatric Tyranny from Managers, from Actors, or from a Conjunction of both, ought not to be eſtabliſhed here. But that the value of Wit, like the Value of all other Commodities, ſhould be ſet by the public Voice, and not to be ſubject either to exerciſing on the one Hand, or to be unreaſonably enhanc'd on the other. For it is always to be remember'd that the Diverſions of the Theatre are but Diverſions, and which is more, but one Sort of Diverſions; ſo that if the Perſons concern'd in them, carry Things too high, the public can go without them; or if forgetting the Nature of theſe Diverſions, they entertain us as

they have ſometimrs done, not by acting, but with the Diſputes of Actors and Actreſſes, not with Dancing, but with the Quarrels of their Dancers; and thus in Effect, turn the Stage into a *Bear-garden*; we can eaſily redreſs this Miſchief, by going to *Hockley* in the Hole, where we may be better entertain'd at leſs Expence. And I am credibly inform'd that it was the Diſputes laſt Year on the Theatre, that put it into the Head of the ingenious Author of *Old England*, to propoſe ſetting up an Amphitheatre, where the Performances of Mr. *Braughton*, ſhould rival thoſe of *Garrick* himſelf: But to return to the Point.

Italy, we know is the Country where dramatic Performances thrive beſt. There is not a City there, in which there are not two or three Theatres, and in *Venice* there are eight, tho' I doubt whether *Venice* contains above a tenth Part of the Inhabitants that are comprehended within our Bills of Mortality. In theſe Theatres the Spectators are wreſtleſs and noiſy before the Play begins. When they would expreſs their Approbation, they baul out *Viva*, *Viva*, as loud as they can roar, and when they are diſpleas'd with an Actor, the Phraſe is *Va Dentro*, which is likewiſe repeated with the utmoſt Vehemence, attended often with Showers of Orange-peels, and Apple-pairings. People pay ſomewhat leſs than nine Pence to be admitted into

the

the Pit, and as much more if they expect a Seat there. As for the Boxes they are let by the Seaſon, which begins in *October*, and ends with the Carnaval. They hold each ſix Perſons, and the Price is regulated according to the Merits of the Price, and of the Actors; ſo that a Box in the upper Gallery has been ſometimes let for a Sequin, which is better than nine Shillings, and a front Box at ten times the Price. Hetetofore, the beſt Actor had not above one hundred Crowns for the Seaſon, and one hundred and twenty was reckoned a great Price for a fine Singer, but we have ſpoiled the *Italians*, with Reſpect to the latter, who now inſiſt upon four or five hundred Pounds, or elſe they talk of going to *London*, but as to Players, I think their Salary ſeldom reaches fifty Pounds.

The *Spaniſh* Theatre is very well regulated, there is always preſent an *Alcaide de Corte* or Magiſtrate, who is attended by his Guards. The Actors are eſteem'd by the beſt Judges, at leaſt as good as any in *Europe*, the Audience clap but never hiſs, they hear patiently a bad play, but when it is over, they declare abſolutely, that they will never hear it again, and are implicitly obeyed. There have been more Plays written in that Language, than in any other. A Bookſeller not long ago, publiſhed a Collection of thoſe

written by anonymous Authors, which conſiſted of four thouſand eight hundred Plays, and the famous *Lopez de Vega*, wrote more than one thouſand five hundred which were acted, and of which, three hundred and twelve have been publiſh'd. The Price of a Seat in the Pit is not above ſix Pence, and a Seat in the Boxes, may be had for leſs than a Shilling. People of Quality indeed take a whole Box. We were formerly very fond of the *Spaniſh* Taſte, and *Spaniſh* Plays, and to ſay the Truth, they come very near our own. We need not therefore be ſurprized, that the Critics are very angry at their Irregularity, which is excuſed by ſome of the beſt *Spaniſh* Writers, in the ſame Manner that we excuſe *Shakeſpear*, that is to ſay, by alledging that ordinary Writers, are bound by Rules, but that great Wits are above them.

The *French* Theatres in Point of Regulation have been always eſteemed the firſt in *Europe*. They are far from being large, containing only a Pit, an Amphitheatre, and three Rows of Boxes. Beſides theſe, there are Seats in the *Orcheſtra*, which accommodate about forty or fifty People. The Prices at Preſent ſtand thus, the firſt Boxes on the Stage, Amphitheatre and *Orcheſtra*, coſt four Livres, or about three Shillings and ſix Pence; the ſecond row of Boxes two Shillings; the third, one and ſix Pence; and the Pit about one Shilling;

ling; but then it is to be obſerved, that one fourth Part of the Net Profits is deducted for the Hoſpitals. The Playhouſe has two ſtreet Doors, one leading to the Pit only, the other, to all the other Diviſions of the Houſe. On one Side of theſe Entrances, there is a Place with Bars, thro' which the Spectator receives a Ticket, that introduces him either to the Pit, or the other Places, and the Ticket is commonly mark'd with the Name of the Seat that is paid for. The Receiver of this upon delivering it at the inner Door of the Playhouſe, gets another there, mark'd *Countermarque*, with the Name of the Place he is entitled to. Theſe Tickets are again delivered to the People, who are placed to open the Boxes, to ſee the Company ſeated in them, and then to ſhut them up as ſoon as they contain eight Perſons, that is four upon the four, and four upon the back Seat. Thus eight may be in one Box, Men and Women, and none of them know each other. But the Truth is, that ſometimes it is very troubleſome ſitting there on Account of the Lady's Hoops; therefore to avoid the Inconveniency, the Ladies commonly ſend in the Morning, or the Night before, to beſpeak a Box for themſelves. Each firſt Box is equivalent to eight Places, and amounts to thirty two Livres, and they who hire it, reſerve it wholly to themſelves. The

ſecond

ſecond Row pays in Proportion ſixteen Livres, and with Regard to the third, as they are upon a Level with the Gallery, no place can be kept there but by ſending a Servant without Livery to keep one, as is done on the Stage and *Orcheſtra*.

The *Dutch* Theatre of which we know very little in *England*, merits however as much Conſideration as perhaps any Stage in *Europe*. That Nation deſerves Eſteem from the Steadineſs and Uniformity of their Conduct. The *Dutch* Plays breathe a *Dutch* Spirit, and are full of generous Sentiments of Liberty and Patriotiſm. The famous *Vondel* one of their beſt Poets wrote a Tragedy entitled *Palamedes*, which is very regular and full of fine Sentiments, and contains an allegorical Satyr on the Stadtholderſhip of Prince *Maurice* of *Orange*, and the barbarous Murder of the Penſionary *Barneveldt*, to whom that Prince ow'd all his Honours, and whoſe hoary Head he brought to a Scaffold for no other Crime, than his Zeal for the Conſtitution of his Country. The *Dutch* Comedies do not appear to be ſo well written as their Tragedies, becauſe the Manners of the People, are not poliſh'd in Proportion to the Luſtre of their Virtues. They are however both pleaſant and inſtructive, and ſerve to render the prevailing Vices of the Times, both odious and ridiculous. To both Tragedies and Comedies, the *Dutch* frequently

quently add a Kind of Farce, call'd in their Language *Kluchſpel*, which are inimitable, eſpecially ſuch as are Originals, for of late Years they have begun to tranſlate *French* Farces, which are very flat when compar'd with their own.

In Point of decorum the *Dutch* Theatre excells all others, their Actors and Actreſſes are all People of Reputation, and cannot appear upon the Stage if ever they ceaſe ſo to be. They have alſo great Merit in their Profeſſion, and yet five hundred Florins is a high Price, ſeven hundred the moſt that ever was heard of for their beſt Actors for a Year, and this in a Country dearer than our own. It is true, they cannot live for fifty, ſixty, or ſeventy Pounds, but then they have all ſome Profeſſion Beſides. Mr. *Duym*, who is their principal Tragedian, is a Bookſeller, and Mr. *Punt*, who is an excellent Comedian is an Engraver; all their Actreſſes are the Wives or Daughters of Burghers, who as they do not abſolutely get their living by a Playhouſe, ſo they neither ſay, or do any Thing there which can blemiſh their Characters in private Life. This is undoubtedly much to their Reputation, and ſhews the Care that the Government has of their Subject's Morals, whereas, in ſome Countries we ſee Tragedies written with a Spirit of Freedom, forbidden, while licentious Comedies and lude Farces appear every Night,

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and are applauded by thoſe, whoſe Examples ſhould teach others to deſpiſe ſuch Scenes of Ribaldry and Obſcenity.

THEIR Playhouſes are a Section of an Oval, the Diameter of which, is form'd by the Stage. Before it is the Orcheſtra, then the Pit, which they call the Back, fill'd with Benches cover'd with Cuſhions. This takes up two thirds of the Space, the remaining third is a Kind of Amphitheatre rais'd about two Foot higher, upon which the Spectators ſtand, the whole is ſurrounded by a Row of Boxes, and in the Theatre at *Amſterdam*, there are two Rows. The Prices here are pretty High, a Place in the Pit coſt twenty Pence, the ſtanding Places ſix Pence, the Boxes thirty Pence, the upper Boxes ten Pence. But by the Profits of the Theatre in *Amſterdam*, beſides the Expence of the Houſe, two Hoſpitals are maintain'd which ſometimes receive two, and ſometimes three thouſand Pounds Sterling a Year. The Managers are ſix Perſons of Reputation, who take care that every Thing is paid with the greateſt Exactneſs, and make up their own Accounts Quarterly; but here as in *Italy*, *Spain*, and *France*, the Audience are the ſole Judges, both of the Author's and Player's Merit, and if they diſapprove of either, the Piece or the Actor, they never appear again.

As to the *Flemiſh* Theatre with which our Officers who have been abroad, are well acquainted, it differs but little in Point of Elegance, or Management from that of the *Dutch*; and if their Decorations are not ſo magnificent as in *Italy*, *France* or *England*, they are however neat, and becoming, which anſwers the Purpoſe full as well. In *Germany* moſt of the Princes have Theatres in their Palaces, of which themſelves defray the Expence, and their Actors are frequently of noble Families; and after gaining a Reputation on the Stage, are very often rewarded with Preferments in the Army, in the State, and even in the Church itſelf. There is one thing peculiar to the *German* Stage, I mean in free Cities where the Expences are defrayed by the Audience, and it is this, that the Author has a certain Allowance every Time his Play is acted, which goes to his Heirs and Aſſigns; ſo that a good Play is an Eſtate in Fee, and for this Reaſon they take all the Care they can to prevent their being printed, for when this is once done, there is an End of the Allowance. Thus we ſee how far the Manners of a Nation are affected by, and may be known from the Diverſions of their reſpective Theatres; and this therefore ought to be a ſtrong Caution to the public, againſt Suffering ſuch ill Cuſtoms to prevail here, as may render

us contemptible abroad. It is one Thing to ſupport our Playhouſes with that Generoſity, for which we are juſtly famous, and another to laviſh away our Money, in a Manner that ſerves only to gain us the Character of Dupes; and with which we are reproach'd even by thoſe who take it, ſince the public has been told lately in print, that the *Fauſans* drew better Audiences, than the good Senſe of *Shakeſpear*, from the Mouth of *Garrick*; which if I underſtand any Thing of the Matter, is ſuch a Stroke of inſolent Satyr, as ſhould ſhame the public into a better Taſte.

We have ſeen from Reaſon and Experience, how far the Manners and Reputation of a People are affected by theatrical Diverſions. We have ſeen that they are a Kind of Indexes, by which the public Temper may be known; and from whence we may certainly pronounce as to the Love of Liberty, public Spirit, Generoſity and Politeneſs of any Nation; becauſe thoſe Virtues for which they have the higheſt Eſteem, will always make the greateſt Figure in their Plays as the Vices, the Conſequences of which they dread moſt, will be drawn into the fouleſt Colours. Thus we ſee towards the latter End of the Reign of Queen *Anne*, the Tragedy of *Cato* was brought upon the Stage, which has done ſo much Honour to *Britain*, by being tranſlated into moſt European Languages.

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The avowed Deſign of this Play was the recommending Principles of Liberty. The *Tories* who were then very potent, might if they had pleas'd, have given ſome Check to its Succeſs, or might at leaſt have taken ſuch Meaſures, as might have prevented the Sentiments of that Play, from becoming the reigning Taſte. But we ſee they did juſt the contrary, and tho' we now hear them every Day arraigned, as the great Enemies of Liberty and Freedom of Sentiment, yet it muſt be confeſs'd, that then they rival'd the *Whigs* themſelves, in applauding that favourite Piece, and Mr. *Booth* never ſcrupled to acknowledge, that he ow'd to Lord *Bolingbroke*'s Kindneſs for him in the Character of *Cato*, the Baſis of his future Fortune. Since that Time we have ſeen another Taſte prevail, I mean the expoſing Corruption, which prov'd fatal to the Liberty of the Stage, though the Report of the ſecret Committee, has full proved, that the ingenious Mr. *Fielding* did not exaggerate.

We have likewiſe ſeen that this Law for reſtraining the Playhouſe, has been fatal to the *Engliſh* Genius, inſomuch, that the Managers muſt now be confined to their old Stock, ſince the Town and the Licenſer, are never likely to agree in Favour of any new Play. It was indeed expected on the late political Turn, that this Law would

have been Repealed; and I once met with a Pamphlet entitled, the *Independant Briton*, which propos'd ſuch a Thing, but like the Place Bill, this was found to be fitter to be talk'd off, than done; and will continue to be thought ſo, probably, as long as the preſent Generation have any Thing to do with Playhouſes. Our great Concern therefore in this Reſpect ought to be, encouraging old Plays, that abound with a truly *Britiſh* Spirit, and which if ever Foreigners come to underſtand them, may ſpeak us a brave, honeſt and free People. This is ſtill in our Power, and the Ladies of the *Shakeſpear* Club, gave a very noble Inſtance of its being their Inclination. Indeed, if ever the Theatre received new Life, it muſt come from this Quarter. The Ladies have been always the beſt Patrons of Wit, and have diſtinguiſhed themſelves by a true Taſte in public Diverſions; from them, therefore we are to expect a conſtant Encouragement of bold, generous and honeſt Sentiments, and by them whatever may propagate low, ſlaviſh and effeminate Manners, will be certainly diſcountenanced. Their ſteady Purſuit of ſuch a Conduct, muſt at laſt prevail over all Obſtacles, and force Men to behave like Men, at leaſt out of Complaiſance. Thus much I think, may ſuffice as to the Power of the Audience in ſupporting good Plays, and diſcouraging bad.

I SHALL next ſay ſomething as to our Reputation. It is certainly a great ſcandal to this Nation, that while we pay ſo generouſly for our Diverſions, thoſe who furniſh them, ſhould be either defrauded or oppreſs'd. This undoubtedly could never be the Deſign of Patents, and whoever is mad enough to fancy, that under ſuch an Authority the public Money may be pocketed, and the Servants of the public go without their Wages, will ſooner or later be brought to Repentance. It has been ſaid, and I am told it can be proved, that we pay no leſs than thirty thouſand Pounds a Year, for the Support of theſe two Theatres, a Sum much more than ſufficient to defray all the neceſſary Expences, as it is a fourth Part more than did actually defray them, when they were under the beſt Management they ever were. Put this Sum into foreign Money, call it one hundred and forty thouſand Crowns, three Hundred thouſand Guilders, or ſix hundred thouſand Livres, and what can any reaſonable Man think, that Foreigners will conceive of us, if while we pay ſuch an immenſe Sum in ready Money, out of our Pockets, we hear nothing but Murmurings, Diſputes and Complaints, amongſt thoſe who receive, or ought to receive it. With ſuch an Income in *Italy*, *France* or *Holland*, the Expence of two Theatres would not only be defrayed,

frayed, but two or three Hoſpitals into the Bargain, and we might then have the Satisfaction of knowing that our Diverſions, contributed to the Eaſe and Subſiſtance of a great Number of our neceſſitous fellow Creatures. This would be at once a great Encouragement to fill the Playhouſes, and a ſtrong Argument in their Favour; many who are now Enemies to theatrical Diverſions, would then approve them, and tho' there might be ſome cynical People, who might ſtill condemn them in their Hearts, yet they would ſcarce venture to purſue them with public Cenſure, for if Charity is able to cover a multitude of Sins, it might certainly excuſe the Expence of our Diverſions.

I WILL not pretend to point out the Manner in which this Charity might be beſt beſtow'd, if I had any Right to do ſo, I might perhaps ſuggeſt that the Hoſpital for Foundlings, ſhould at leaſt claim a conſiderable Share of what by this Means might be employ'd for the public Service. A Committee of the Governors of that Hoſpital, might have a Power given them to ſuperintend theſe Diverſions; they might appoint Treaſurers; they might controul the Expences; they might ſee that every Body was paid what they juſtly deſerved; and all this without any Prejudice, either to the Managers, or the Actors, for it is moſt

apparent

apparent, that the preſent Confuſion does not ariſe from the Want of a ſufficient Fund, but from the Want of neceſſary Oeconomy, mix'd perhaps with the Want of Skill, in ſuch as take upon them to direct the Pleaſures of the public, and at the ſame Time give themſelves up to mind nothing but their own. But whatever it proceeds from it ought to be redreſſed, becauſe as it ſtands at Preſent, it is a Thing of public Notoriety, that the Players are diſtreſs'd, and the Town bubbled.

One of our theatrical Potentates, ſeems to be very much offended with the Appeal made by the Players to the Public; and eſpecially, with their Demand that a fair Account of his Receipts and Diſburſments ſhould be produced. This has been compared to a Journeyman's demanding his Maſter's Books, from which it differs very much, for tho' the Manager is generally ſtiled Maſter of the Playhouſe, yet that is a ſtyle of Office only, for the public ſtrictly and truly ſpeaking are the Player's Maſters, and his too: and for this plain Reaſon, becauſe they pay them; ſo that if any Compariſon of this Sort muſt take Place, and if the Players are in any Senſe Journeymen, he is properly ſpeaking but the Foreman; and if he Acts amiſs, and does not pay his fellow Servants, they have a clear Right to complain to their Maſters, who intruſted him with Money for that Purpoſe,

poſe, and whoever does not ſee this muſt be blind. As to the Authority of Parliament, and another Authority from which he may imagine his Power will be ſupported, they will certainly fail him, for if it comes out that under Colour of theſe Authorities, People are either oppreſs'd or defrauded, they are certainly not without Remedy, becauſe the ſame Power upon a Petition, will interpoſe again, and provide a Method for preventing the Tyranny of Managers, as well as the Licentiouſneſs of the Stage, for one is as much an Evil as the other, and as the former had a Tendency to corrupt the Morals, ſo this is a viſible Fraud upon the Audience, and ſuch a Miſapplication of public Money, as upon a dutiful Repreſentation in a proper Place, will certainly meet with a ſpeedy Cure.

But it is neceſſary for me to declare, that I do not mean by any Thing I have advanced, to give the leaſt Colour or Countenance to the exorbitant Demands of Players. We find that theſe Sort of People, have always had too good an Opinion of themſelves; and whenever they have been able to gain an Aſcendancy over the Minds of People, they have rais'd their Demands to ſuch prodigious Heights, as have in the End been fatal to their Profeſſion, by obliging the Magiſtrate to interpoſe, which never could happen but from

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the Irregularity of their Conduct. Hence it is that *Solon*, *Plato*, *Seneca* and other great Moraliſts, were for excluding them from a well governed State, and for the ſame Reaſon, the younger *Pliny*, applauds the Emperor *Trajan* in his Panagyrick, for having caus'd them to be baniſh'd out of the *Roman* Empire. It is therefore the greateſt Friendſhip that can be done to theſe Sort of People, to perſuade them to keep within Bounds, becauſe it is the only Way to preſerve them. We ſee from the Character given by *Horace* of *Tigellius*, and from other Strokes in his Works, as well as from ſeveral warm Paſſages in *Juvenal*, and other antient Poets; what a Pronenes there is in all of this Profeſſion, to exceed the reaſonable Bounds of Expence, and to affect, tho' they perſonate People of Quality only ſometimes, to live like them always. We ought then on the one Hand, to make ſome Allowance for Failings, that ſeem to flow from their Employment; and they on the other Hand, ſhould liſten with Patience to our Reproofs, unleſs they eſteem themſelves wiſer, or better, than all their Predeceſſors.

All the Lovers of good Senſe, and Friends to ſuch Plays as do Honour to the *Britiſh* Stage, muſt have a great Regard for the young Gentleman, that has done ſo much towards reſtoring the former, and reviving the latter. They muſt ſee

with great Satisfaction ſuch an Actor triumph over Dancers and Pantomimes, and they will certainly be ready on all Occaſions to ſupport ſuch a Hero, againſt all the Force and Fraud of the Harlequin Tribe. I muſt confeſs, that I have been myſelf a Hearer and Spectator of this great Man with Amazement, and have been more enlightned from his Manner of pronouncing *Shakeſpear*, than by the laborious Commentaries of the induſtrious Mr. *T—b—ld.* I have ſeen him in *Lear*, I have ſeen him in *Hamlet*, and I think him excellent in both, and ſo much the more excellent, becauſe from the very Manner of his playing, it appears, that he has been his own Maſter, and that he borrows nothing from the Playhouſe, but the Means of diſcovering his own great Abilities. In ſhort, I am convinced that I eſteem and admire this Actor, as much as any Man in the Kingdom, except himſelf; and yet with all this, I cannot help owning myſelf ſurprized at ſeeing it a Fact agreed on both Sides, that laſt Winter he received two hundred Guineas for three Nights. It is indeed ſaid, that the Neceſſity of the Manager induced this, and therefore he complains of it as a Hardſhip; to which it is replied, it could be no Hardſhip, becauſe he got by it. I do not preſume to determine the Diſpute between the Parties, but I will be bold to ſay, the public ought not,

cannot

cannot encourage, or acquieſce under any ſuch Price as this; and I muſt confeſs, it is not a little wonderful to me, that Men otherwiſe of good Senſe, ſhould think it adviſeable to publiſh ſuch a Fact. It muſt appear almoſt incredible, that People ſhould be ſo mad, as to run into ſuch exceſſive Expences, their preſent Circumſtances conſider'd, and Poſterity will hardly believe, that while a Nation paid ten thouſand Pounds a Day Intereſt for the public Debt, the Audience of one Theatre, ſhould give a ſingle Actor near ſeventy Pounds for an Evening's Diverſion.

The Town are perhaps a little too ready to enquire into Peoples private Characters, and to except againſt a Man's Credit in his Profeſſion, becauſe they do not like his Humour, or Way of Living. This is equally unreaſonable and abſurd. If a Man performs well upon the Stage, the Audience ought to enquire after him no farther; and it is certainly nothing to them, whether he lays aſide the Surlineſs of his Part, as ſoon as he ſhifts his Cloaths, or carries it into the next Company. If he preſerves a theatrical Air in the Tranſactions of common Life, and his whole Demeanour retains a ſtrong Tincture of the Stage, what is that to the World? But if ſuch a Man becauſe he is always a Player, ſhould expect to be always paid, and fancies that the public is as much bound to allow him a Sa-

lary for his morning Humours in the Coffee Houſe, as for what he contributes to their evening Diverſions. This ſurely would be a little hard. But if he ſhould carry the Matter ſtill farther, and inſiſt on being paid as a Lord of Trade, or a Commiſſioner of the Cuſtoms, would any Body think it reaſonable? Let a Gentleman plant himſelf at a Coffee-Houſe, between the Middle of the *Strand* and *Fleet* Ditch about eleven in the Morning, he ſhall ſee a train of handſome Chariots with grave old Gentlemen in them, going regularly to the laſt mentioned Board, and if he drops in at three, he may have the Pleaſure of ſeeing them again, and this every Day in the Week the Year round, (Holidays excepted) and yet they are thought to be well paid at one thouſand Pound *per Ann.* from which there are always ſome, and in former Times were pretty large Deductions. When they are content with this, with what Face can the like Sum be ask'd by a Player; or while we complain of Debts and Taxes, how is it conſiſtent with Reaſon or Juſtice for us to allow it? If we can afford it, we ought to pay our Debts, if we cannot, we are laviſhing away our Creditors Money. But it has been long ago obſerv'd, that as Extravagancy produces Bankrupts: So there are none ſo extravagant as Bankrupts. May this Reflection be always confined to private Perſons.

I SHALL

I SHALL very readily admit that the Buſineſs of an Actor, requires Parts and Application, and that where theſe meet, the public ought to encourage them. But it muſt at the ſame Time be conſidered, that at leaſt, as great Parts and Application are requiſite in other Profeſſions, which have been always held ſomewhat ſuperior to the Stage. For Inſtance, Law, and Phyſic; yet in either no ſuch Sums were ever talk'd of, or expected, ſeventy Pounds for an Evening, is what no Gentleman at the Bar could ever think of deſerving, and therefore let the Merit of a Player be ever ſo great, I doubt it will be thought to high a Reward. I hinted indeed before at a Circumſtance, which leſſens it very conſiderably, I mean the Neceſſity of the Manager, which ſeems to be confeſs'd on both Sides, for the one Paper ſays that tho' a Preſent, it was in a Manner extorted, and the other alledges, that the Manager would willingly have given the ſame Sum for three Nights more, becauſe exorbitant as it was, he was ſtill a Gainer by it. We ſee the Danger therefore of running blindly into theſe Sort of Expences, for if a Manager could get Money, and pay an Actor ſo extravagantly, it follows that theatric Diverſions may be had at a much more moderate Price than they are; or if we are content to pay at the old rate, great Savings may be made

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for the public Service, that may be applied as I propoſed before, to the augmenting the Revenues of the foundling Hoſpital; or if that ſhall not be thought more expedient, to eſtabliſh a Fund for the Maintainance of decayed Players, their Widows or Children.

At all Events, I conceive it abſolutely unreaſonable for the public, ſince theſe Facts have been made known to them to continue longer in this Courſe. We might formerly plead Ignorance as to theſe Expences, but now the Quarrels of Managers and Actors have put that out of our Power, and if we go on in the ſame Way, it may be fatal to us in many Reſpects. For the public knows, or at leaſt ought to know, that among other Methods by which great Politicians calculate the Wealth of the People, one is from the Coſt of their Diverſions. It is therefore a Matter of no ſmall Importance to prevent any miſtaken Computations upon this Head, for fear of their having Conſequences more dangerous than might be at firſt Sight apprehended. A great Patriot once, and a great Miniſter now, was pleas'd at no greater a Diſtance, than laſt Seſſons, to obſerve in anſwer to the Complaints that were made of the Poverty and Diſtreſs of the Nation, to aſſert that the landed Revenue of this Kingdom, was twenty Millions, and the Expen-

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ces of the trading and monied Part of the Nation three Times as much; whence he inferr'd, that it was a ridiculous thing to grumble at the Sums annually granted for the public Service, ſince whenever our all-wiſe Governors thought it proper, much more might very well be taken. According therefore to this Train of Reaſoning, if we are willing and able to part with thirty thouſand Pounds a Year, for the ſupport only of two Theatres, the ſame generous and public ſpirited Stateſman may from thence conclude, that we may yet afford much more to ſuccour the Houſe of *Auſtria*; to pay for the pulling down the *French*, or to clap into the lighter Scale, in order to trim the Ballance of Power exactly; and ſo by this unlucky Quarrel, between the Managers, and the Players, we may be ſpeeched out of a Million or two extraordinary. I do not doubt but there are ſome ſurly People, who will take this for *down right* Sneer and Banter, but I proteſt ſolemnly I am ſerious, nor can I conceive that People of any Reflection, can imagine that I puſh the Matter too far, when they conſider firſt, that great Men muſt be upon the hunt for Money, the Seaſon of Supplies coming on; and next, that it is far more likely they ſhould run their Noſes into Playhouſes, than into Ginſhops, which laſt

Years

Years Experience however convinces us, did not eſcape them.

But, very poſſibly it may be conſider'd, as an inſurmountable Obſtacle to what I propoſe; that the Parties concerned may not ſubmit to ſuch a new Regulation; that in ſhort, the Managers will inſiſt upon their Patents, which flow from the mere Grace and Favour of the Crown; and the Players on their reſpective Merits, and the Right they have, as *Britons*, to value this ſame Merit of theirs, at what Rate they ſhall think fit. But alas! can they imagine, that the Crown itſelf will ever ſuffer a Patent to ſtand in the Way of Public Good, prefer a Play-houſe to an Hoſpital, or, have more Regard for the private Intereſt of a Manager, than for that of the Community. No, no, that is never to be feared, and beſides, if even ſuch were the Caſe, there are ordinary, and extraordinary Ways of coming at Patents, and of rendering them void, when they are viſibly abuſed. Beſides, does not every Body know, that the Power of reſtraining theſe Theatres, and of Licenſing others, is, by Law, placed in a certain Hand, in Truſt for the public Benefit; and can any one, who is acquainted with the Honour and Integrity, the Generoſity and Public Spirit of that moſt noble Perſon, doubt of his executing it with the utmoſt Fidelity and Exactneſs. Let us,

therefore,

therefore, be no longer under Pain at this Point, for certainly, when a Reformation is intended in earneſt, it will be found in our Favour; for a Patent ought to be ſupported no longer than while it anſwers its Purpoſe.

As to Oppoſition from the other Quarter, I mean the Actors, this cannot give the Public any Trouble. If they conceive too highly of their Merit, it muſt flow from their Miſtakes, as to the Sentiments of the Town, for upon that, and that only, a Players Merit depends. A Man in common Life, often takes Compliments for Realities, and fancies he has a prodigious Intereſt, when, in Fact, he has none at all. The ſame Thing happens, as very well it may happen, to an Actor. He, from the Applauſe of an Audience, runs into an Opinion, that rather than want him, they will part with ſix, ſeven, eight hundred, or a Thouſand a Year; but it is extreamly eaſy to convince ſuch a Man of his Error, and if an Audience will not do this, they may be ſure, that their Indolence will heighten his Vanity, and from one, he may come to demand 5000 a Year, with equal Reaſon, and with equal Title; ſo that, if in the end you are the dernier Reſort, and muſt decree what is Merit, and what is the Value of Merit, you had as good do this at firſt as at laſt, and fix it now at 300, as leave it to be done three Years hence; for whenever it is done, vain

Men will think it a Hardſhip. ——— But what of that? Let them puniſh themſelves with their own Reflections, if the Town ſaves Money all is well.

People who fancy that Men who have ſuperiour Talents, have a Kind of a Right to compel ſuch as fall ſhort of them, to pay them what Tribute they pleaſe, are exceedingly miſled. All Things have a natural juſt and equitable Standart, and to puſh Things beyond this is quite prepoſterous. Humour, Accident, twenty Things may fall out to render it ſometimes poſſible, but nothing can happen that will make this Madneſs laſt. Hear what the Actors ſay themſelves. Good Senſe, *Shakeſpear* and little *G——k* got the better of Pantomime, Buffonry, and Dancing. Very well, and dont you think Prudence and Oeconomy may get the better of a Paſſion for ſeeing, or hearing Plays, however wrote or acted? Doubtleſs it will, it muſt in the Courſe of Time, unleſs you imagine the Taint of Folly ſo ſtrong in the Preſent Age, as to tranſmit the Infection to lateſt Poſterity, which is paying a very indifferent Compliment not to us only, but to Providence. On the whole therefore, if there be as I am informed there really are, Men wild enough to dream that after the Secrets of the Theatre have been revealed, and the World ſatisfied, that a Player has cleared more in three Days, than Dr. *M.* or the S——ll——r G—n—l

G—n—l do in as many Weeks, tho' the firſt Men in their reſpective Profeſſions: If I ſay ſuch People there are, let us bring them to their Senſes. Theſe are no Times to be mad in, out of Complaiſance, we have Burthens enough without wantonly laying them on our Shoulders, and we may certainly give ſtrong Teſtimonies of our liking to a Actor who has Merit, without beſtowing on him a greater Eſtate, than the moſt public ſpirited Induſtry can acquire. Merit has always a Relation to Society, this gives the public an indubitable Title to fix its Worth, and upon this only, for the good of Society I inſiſt.

Besides, to what Purpoſe this Profuſion? Why ſay ſome of theſe People, who have had Time to conſider what to ſay, that we may have an opportunity of laying up for old Age, and our Families. This carries a plauſible Appearance, and I am willing it ſhould have all the Weight it deſerves. But then how would you have them ſubſiſt? How would you proportion their ſavings? Some Bounds you muſt ſet, or Neceſſity will ſet Bounds to you. Is it your Pleaſure that Players dreſs like Lords, nay, like young Lords, eat like Prieſts, keep their Miſtreſſes, have their town and country Houſes, and give Law to every Tavern and Coffee-houſe where they come? This many of them do already, what would you, nay, what they have more? To ſuch a preſent Sub-

ſiſtance would you ſtill join a Power of laying up? Reflect to what this muſt amount? Add to this another Conſideration, whether ſuch a Condeſcenſion on one Side, might not tempt extravagancy on the other? At this Rate, what are you doing, or when will you have done? Granting it reaſonable that a great Player ſhould live as well as a great Lord (who very often is an Actor too) at the Expence of the public, muſt this be extended to his Poſterity? By what Law, or for what Reaſon? Yet if his Children do not live as they are brought up, you know they muſt be miſerable, according to the common Opinion, and to enable every Player to live as he pleaſes, and after all, to leave enough behind him to continue this Scene of revelling thro' the next Generation, exceeds the Power of an Audience, and therefore, it is much better to retrench in Time. Better for you who have much to pay. Better for them who will by this Exerciſe of your Reaſon, be taught to live as they ought.

WHILE we are on this Topic, give me leave to repreſent to you ſome Advantages that Actors enjoy ſuperiour to moſt of their Audience. In the firſt Place, they trade upon other Folks Stock. They have in the Way of their Buſineſs neither Houſe-Rent, Materials, Servants, Tools, or any Thing elſe to find. All theſe are provided for them, which I ſuppoſe tempted the Manager to

call

call them Journeymen. Next, their Salaries are free from Taxes, Abatements, or Deductions of any Kind, and are if I may ſo ſpeak, a Sort of rent Charges on the public, which makes three hundred *per Ann.* worth four hundred *per Ann.* in Land, and renders a healthy Actors Property at that Salary, worth at a moderate Computation, four thouſand Pounds. This if we remember, the Circumſtances ſome of theſe People were in (and I am very ſorry, this is in moſt of our Remembrances) will appear a very ſufficient Recompence for their entring the Service of the public, if it was attended with no other Advantage. But then there are their Benefits, which thro' the bounty of the Town amount frequently to what formerly would have been thought a good Salary. Theſe I would by no Means retrench, and in ſwelling them, the Regard of the Town for good Actors principally appears. Let every Body in this Reſpect act as they think fit, and let a fav'rite Player raiſe a Fortune in a Year, by the free Gifts of his Admirers. The public has nothing to do, with what reſults from the pure Effects of private Fancy. Take all this however together, and it will appear that Players of diſtinguiſh'd Merit, may enjoy from two, to ſix hundred Pounds *per Ann.* and if they have Wives in the Buſineſs, near a thouſand, now if this will not content them, you can ſcarce hope to

do

do it, but by granting a Subſidy as of old to the Crown, and adding ſix Pence in the Pound on the Land, for the civil Liſt of our mock Sovereigns the Players. This you ſee is Truth, and therefore let it not offend you, ſince nothing could move me to ſet forth ſuch diſagreeable Truths, but Regard for the public.

You have now the whole Affair before you, and all the Lights, all the Evidence you can poſſibly want. You ſee how far Theatres in other Countries have contributed to Form, and to reform the Manners of the Inhabitants; and how this Spirit has been every where Depreſſed, tho' leaſt of all here; which is the beſt Reaſon can be given, why the Play-houſes here deſerve the Encouragement and Protection of the Public. You have ſeen how Machinery, Decoration, and ſuch like extrinſic Additions have enervated the Drama, and reduced the Stage, to a level with a Puppet-Show; and at the ſame time, lifted its Expences beyond the Revenue of *German* Principalities. You have ſeen that all over *Europe*, the Expences of theatrical Diverſions, are infinitely ſhort of Yours, at the ſame time that they are as well Managed to the full. That they make Charity and Entertainment, Diverſions and Oeconomy, the love of Pleaſure, and the Care of the Neceſſitous; ſhake Hands by appropriating the Surplus of the Play-houſe Revenues, to the ſupport

port of Hoſpitals. You have ſeen the Madneſs and Folly of going on in the old Way, and furniſhing the Managers with ſo many Thouſands a Year, without Rhime or Reaſon, as well as without Account. You ſee how this has been returned, by telling you, that *Fauſan*'s move you, as much as *Shakeſpear*; and that if there has been a mighty diſſipation of Money on Singers, Dancers, Fidlers, Harlequins and Zanies, yet 'tis all your own Fault, you would have them, Coſt what they would; you were the Children who cried for theſe Rattles, and therefore 'twas fit you ſhould Pay for them. This came of taking up with the Managers Taſte, his Pantomimes, Groteſques, and all the reſt of his Stage Mummery.

You ſee that when you were grown Sick of this, and would go back again to plain good Senſe, and take up with the excellent Plays left us by the Poets of the laſt Age, even this Piece of Wiſdom became a new ſource of Impoſition. You had the good Nature to daggle after a young Actor, to the moſt diſtant part of the Town, to which it was difficult to get, and to get from whence, it was ten times more difficult. This reſpect of yours for good Senſe, made amends for your Miſtake about the *Fauſan*'s, and reſtored *Shakeſpear*, *Otway* and *Rowe*, to their juſt Dominion over the Theatre; the Conſequence of which has been, that in prejudice to the Authors Worth, and your Taſte, a handful of Players are pleas'd

to

to aſcribe all this to their own Merit. The ſingle Queſtion therefore before you is, Whether you will ſet down with this patiently, and be contented to Pay ſo much more, than you were wont to be ſo much the worſe uſed? As it is, you ſee plainly that you part with 30,000 a Year, to no purpoſe in the World. Your upper Servants are diſtracted with the loads of Money you pour in upon them; and the under Ones, are Starving for want of their Wages, which are nominally extravagant, and in reality little or nothing, unleſs where it can be got by force. This indeed highly excuſes the preſent Demands of the Players, for judging as they do of what is to come, by what's paſt, they may well think 600 *l.* a Year a bare Subſiſtance; where paying a juſt Debt in trifling Sums by the Week, is exhibited to the World with all the Oſtentation of Charity. Theſe People find it impoſſible to live upon large Salaries that run on and are never Paid, which makes them ask more, tho' it is plain, they could live better upon leſs, if they knew how to come at it regularly.

LET then the Public exert it ſelf here, as in it's proper Province; let it bring the Managers to Juſtice; the Actors to Reaſon; and the Theatres under a due Regulation, by explicitly declaring what they think it is fit for all Parties to do, and giving Countenance to none, 'till all this be done.

FINIS.